

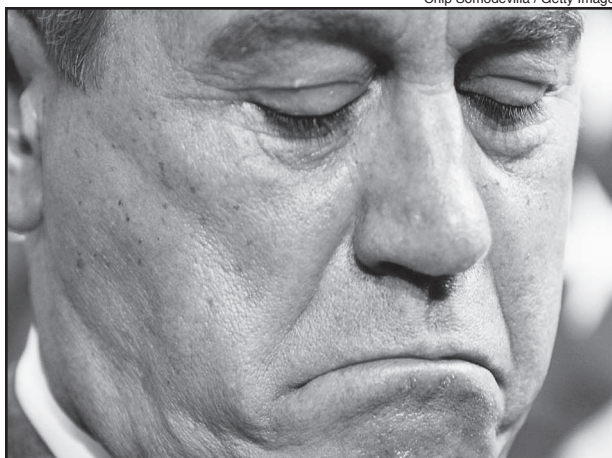
The U.S. budget crisis — Bosses win, workers lose



Seth Periman / AP



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(Clockwise) Illinois state workers protest governor's plan to renege on paying their contractual raises. • President Obama discusses budget at July 11 press conference. • House Speaker John Boehner speaks to press about Republican budget proposals.

BY JEFF MACKLER

Following many weeks of staged political wrangling in Congress, President Obama signed “emergency legislation” on Aug. 2 that projects more than \$2 trillion in budget cuts over the next decade. The law also raises the ceiling on the government’s immediate borrowing abilities by \$400 billion, with \$500 billion more assured in

the autumn.

Under the new law, the federal budget, which currently runs about \$3.7 trillion, will be scaled down by less than 1 percent (about \$21 billion) next year—with much larger cuts occurring in later years. Closed-door negotiations by a congressional committee representing the ruling rich and their twin parties, often called the Gang of 12, will have the task of recommending more budget

of programs that benefit working people. Undoubtedly, even more cuts will be undertaken in later negotiations, not to mention further tinkering with corporate tax rates to the advantage of the rich.

Over the course of 10 years, it is likely that eligibility for full Social Security benefits will be edged up to age

items to cut. “Everything is on the table for that committee,” said White House Press Secretary Jay Carney.

Commentators in the media predict that over the next 10 years Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid will be slashed by some \$650 billion, along with an additional \$1.2 trillion in discretionary spending cuts, many of which come out

(continued on page 4)

Sept. 15 march for Palestine at the UN

By THE EDITORS

A broad coalition of groups supporting Palestinian rights is sponsoring a Sept. 15 march on the United Nations. The demands of the New York City march are: Sovereignty Now! Enforce the Right of Return! Full Equality for All! End All U.S. Aid to Israel! End the Occupation! Support Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions!

The date was chosen because that is when Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas has said he will call for a UN vote on “recognition” of Palestine—more precisely, of a bantustan, an artificially-segmented “state” on a discontinuous fraction of the 22% of historic Palestine represented by the West Bank and Gaza.

But despite the inadequate nature of what Abbas is calling for, and the likelihood that he’ll back out of calling for a vote at the last minute due to U.S. and Israeli pressures and promises, supporters of Palestinian self-determination are taking advantage of the media attention to launch their own rally. Millions of Palestinians around the world are watching these events with a keen eye to using them to intervene on their own behalf with their own demands.

Abbas, as well as UN Envoy Riyad Mansour and jailed Fateh leader Marwan Barghouti, have called for mass mobilizations in Palestine to back their diplomatic moves. Once again, we can have no confidence that these calls will be

carried out.

But leading Palestinian activists are taking full advantage of the discussion that has mushroomed as a result of the PA initiatives. They do so with the increased self-confidence of Palestinians worldwide as a result of the May and June Marches for Return to the borders from Syria, Lebanon, and elsewhere—and Israel’s increasing isolation.

The organizers of the UN protest have made clear they do not support Abbas’ diplomatic “solution,” and the demands of the rally reflect this independent character.

Palestinians in the United States are also seizing this opportunity to step up momentum around the Palestinian

Movement Assemblies called by the U.S. Palestinian Community Network. The PMAs are local gatherings of Palestinian communities intended to let them come together to articulate their demands, and to organize support for the right of Palestinians all around the world to participate in direct, long-overdue elections to the Palestine National Council. Only such elections, and the mass mobilizations and community organizing needed to win them, can bring onto the world stage a Palestinian leadership who, rather than promoting diplomatic two-state sellouts, will press for the full range of Palestinian needs and rights.

Socialist Action urges all of our readers to build Sept. 15, and to support the activities of USPCN and its affiliates. For more information, e-mail palestineun@gmail.com. ■

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Chicago in 2012: Protest the G-8 and NATO!

A Call by the United National Antiwar Committee (UNAC)

At the invitation of the White House, military and civilian representatives of the 28-nation U.S.-commanded and largely U.S.-financed North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and heads of state and finance ministers of the G-8 world economic powers are convening in Chicago, May 15-22, 2012.

The U.S./NATO military behemoth enforces the interests of the global great power elites. \$Trillions are expended for never-ending wars and occupations while \$trillions in austerity programs are extracted from working people the world over.

The G-8 nations, the richest on earth, will assemble to plan ever new draconian measures seeking to resolve the problems created by their crisis-ridden and profit-driven social order at the expense of working people and the poor everywhere.

Theirs is the agenda of the heads of state of the world's richest nations and their imperial military-industrial establishments—the agenda of the banks and corporations—the agenda for austerity, unprecedented social cutbacks, union-busting, environmental destruction, global warming/climate crisis, racism, sexism, homophobia, deepening attacks on civil liberties, democratic rights and never-ending war.

Ours is the agenda for humanity's future. We will mobilize in the tens of thousands from cities across the U.S. and around the world. On Tuesday, May 15, the opening day of the NATO/G-8 deliberations, we will announce our agenda with a press conference, rally, and peaceful march. On Saturday, May 19, we will mobilize for a massive march and rally—exercising our democratic rights to peaceful assembly to demand:

- Bring All U.S./NATO Troops, Mercenaries & War Contractors Home Now! Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan,



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

Libya, the Middle East and Elsewhere.

- End U.S. Aid to Israel! End U.S. Aid to the Israeli Occupation of Palestine! End the Siege of Gaza! No to Threats of War Against Iran! End the Sanctions Now!

- Trillions for Jobs, Housing, Education, Health Care, Pensions and the Environment! No to Attacks on Unions, Cutbacks, Layoffs, Mortgage Foreclosures and Austerity! Bring the War Dollars Home!

- Tax the Rich, Not Working People! No to Corporate and Bank Bailouts!

- Civil Liberties for All! End Racist Attacks on Muslim and Arab Communities! End Racist Attacks on Blacks, Latinos and Immigrants! Full Legal Rights for All! No to FBI Repression and Grand Jury Subpoenas to Antiwar and Social Justice Activists!

The right to protest: We will demand that our guaranteed civil liberties and democratic rights be respected—that our right to peaceful assembly and political protest be honored—that the voices of the people not be stifled!

The May 15 and 19, 2012 mobilizations were initiated by the United National Antiwar Committee (UNAC) in partnership with antiwar and social justice groups in Chicago, across the U.S., and internationally. At the June 18, New York City National Coordinating Committee meeting of UNAC, the 49 groups present unanimously adopted a resolution to protest the NATO/G8 meetings. They are listed as follows:

Action for a Progressive Pakistan • Al-Awda Palestine Right to Return Coalition - NY • BAYAN-USA • Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace • Bail Out the People Movement • Black Agenda Report • Black is Back • Boston Stop the Wars • Boston UNAC • Code Pink • Committee to Stop FBI Repression • Ct. United for Peace • Fellowship of Reconciliation • Green Party • Haiti Liberte' • Hampshire Students for Justice in Palestine • Honduras Resistencia - USA • International Action Center • International Support Haiti Network • International League of People's Struggle • International Socialist Organization • Islamic Leadership Council of Metropolitan NY • Jersey City Peace Movement • May 1st Workers and Immigrant Rights Coalition • Mobilization Against War and Occupation - Canada • Metro West Peace Action • Middle East Crisis Committee • Muslim Peace Coalition • New England United • Nodutdol Korean Community Development • Pakistan Solidarity Network • Philly Against War • Project Salam • Rhode Island Mobilization Committee • Rochester Against War • SI - Solidarity with Iran • Socialist Action • Socialist Party USA • Thomas Merton Center Pittsburgh • Veterans for Peace • Voices for Creative Nonviolence • West Hartford Citizens for Peace • WESPAC • Women's International League for Peace and Freedom • Workers World • World Can't Wait

A national coordinating committee and its Chicago counterpart, open to and inclusive of the direct and democratic participation of all antiwar and social justice organizations is in formation. Join us! Endorse the May 15 and May 19, 2012 Chicago mobilizations against the NATO-G-8 warmakers.

No to NATO/G-8 Warmakers! **A National Network Opposing War and Austerity:** E-mail, NATOG8protest@gmail.com. Chicago tel., (773) 301-0109 or (773) 209-1187. National, (518) 227-6947. ■

A WORKERS' ACTION PROGRAM TO FIGHT THE CRISIS

We propose an **EMERGENCY CONGRESS OF LABOR** to discuss and take steps to implement the following demands —

1) **Bail out the people, not the bankers! Open the account books of the banks to full public inspection. Nationalize the banks to be supervised by workers' committees.**

2) **No foreclosures! No forced evictions! Cancel usurious debt payments, and reduce mortgage payments in proportion to their capitalist-caused decline in value.**

3) **Full employment at union wages! An emergency public works program to employ all jobless workers and youth! Employ people to build what we need — low-cost quality housing, efficient mass transportation, cheap and renewable sources of power, schools, clinics — and to conserve our water, forests, farmland, and open space.**

4) **Immediate and full withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq & Afghanistan! Close all U.S. bases abroad! No money for the military — use funds instead for public works! Convert the war industries to making products for people's needs and to combat global warming.**

5) **Reduce the workweek to 30 hours with no cut in pay, and cut the retirement age to 55. Provide unemployment and retirement payments at the level of union wages and benefits.**

6) **To combat inflation: A sliding scale of wages and pensions that matches the rises in consumer prices. To combat high medical costs: A free, universal, public health-care system.**

7) **Immediate citizenship for all undocumented workers. No job discrimination; equal pay for equal work — regardless of gender, sexual orientation, skin color, or national origin.**

8) **Nationalize manufacturing, big agribusiness, energy, and transportation corporations and place them under the control of elected committees of workers.**

9) **To mobilize support for the demands it adopts, the EMERGENCY CONGRESS should organize ACTION COMMITTEES in every workplace and neighborhood threatened by the crisis. These committees can draw up more concrete demands than the ones outlined above.**

10) **To put all these measures into effect, we need a LABOR PARTY — based on a fighting union movement and all people who are oppressed and exploited. For a workers' government!**

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Calif. prisoners wage daring hunger strike

By REBECCA DORAN

SAN FRANCISCO—In the spring of 2011, prisoners inside Northern California's Pelican Bay State Prison contacted Bay Area prisoners' rights and prison abolition organizations and requested support for an indefinite rolling hunger strike against 20-40 years of mental and physical torture. The strike would begin July 1.

The hunger strike organizers included 50-100 men in the prison's notorious solitary confinement area, also known as the SHU, or Security Housing Unit. They reached beyond the prison's carefully manufactured racial, generational, and geographical boundaries, and organized themselves around five basic core demands.

The hunger strikers asked that the organizations on the outside form a coalition that would amplify their voices from the inside. Responding to this request, groups such as Critical Resistance, California Prison Focus, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, and All of Us or None joined forces to form the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity coalition. The group moved into action quickly, putting forth the five core demands:

1) Eliminate group punishments. Instead, practice individual accountability. When an individual prisoner breaks a rule, the prison often punishes a whole group of prisoners of the same race. This policy has been applied to keep prisoners in the SHU indefinitely and to make conditions increasingly harsh.

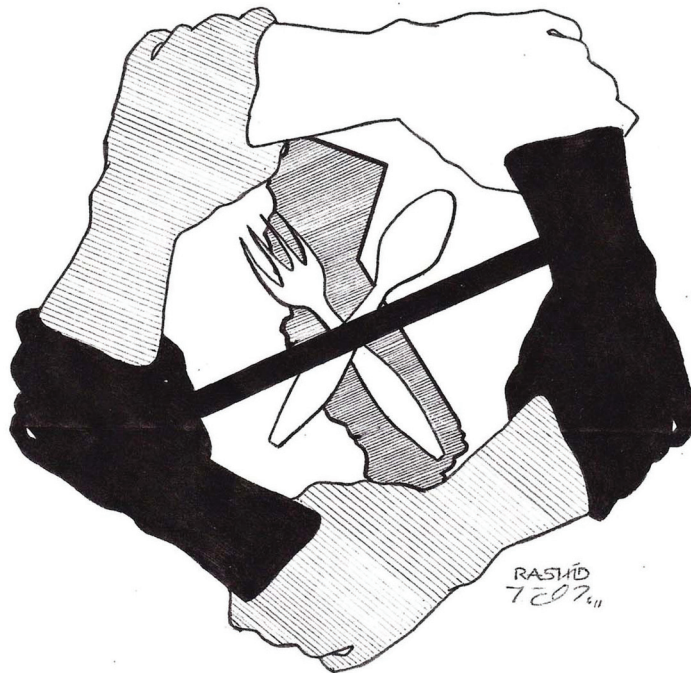
2) Abolish the debriefing policy and modify active/inactive gang status criteria. Prisoners are accused of being active or inactive participants of prison gangs using false or highly dubious evidence, and are then sent to long-term isolation (SHU). They can escape these tortuous conditions only if they "debrief," that is, provide information on gang activity. Debriefing produces false information (wrongly landing other prisoners in SHU, in an endless cycle) and can endanger the lives of debriefing prisoners and their families.

3) Comply with the recommendations of the U.S. Commission on Safety and Abuse in Prisons (2006) regarding an end to long-term solitary confinement. This bipartisan commission specifically recommended to "make segregation a last resort" and "end conditions of isolation." Yet as of May 18, 2011, California kept 3259 prisoners in SHUs and hundreds more in Administrative Segregation waiting for a SHU cell to open up. Some prisoners have been kept in isolation for more than 30 years.

4) Provide adequate food. Prisoners report unsanitary conditions and small quantities of food that do not conform to prison regulations. There is no accountability or independent quality control of meals.

5) Expand and provide constructive programs and privileges for indefinite SHU inmates. The hunger strikers are pressing for opportunities "to engage in self-help treatment, education, religious and other productive activities." Currently, these opportunities are routinely denied, even if the prisoners want to pay for correspondence courses themselves. Examples of privileges the prisoners want are: one phone call per week, and permission to have sweatsuits and watch caps. (Often warm clothing is denied, though the cells and exercise cage can be bitterly cold.) All of the privileges mentioned in the demands are already allowed at other SuperMax prisons (in the federal prison system and other states).

As America was planning its July 4th celebrations, the hunger strikers began their act of resistance against



The strikers appear to have won some gains. But solidarity is needed for the continuing struggle.

torture in America. To the state of California's dismay, solidarity rallies sprung up in cities around the world. And by the state's estimates, at least 6600 people in 13 prisons around California engaged in a one-day hunger strike on July 1 to express their support. Activists pointed out, however, that the California Department of Corrections has a long history of dishonesty, and that the number was much likely in the tens of thousands.

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of prisoners fasted for an extended period of time. Stories slowly began spilling out of various prisons—such as Corcoran, Valley State Prison for Women, and Calipatria—about people who, despite having never met the men in Pelican Bay, stopped consuming food and water for weeks to support the struggle.

Innocent San Quentin death-row inmate Kevin Cooper joined the one-day solidarity fast on July 1 and made his opinion and spirit of resistance clear in an interview with the San Francisco *BayView* newspaper. Cooper said, "I'm behind the strike. If that comes back to haunt me somewhere down the line in the criminal justice system, so be it."

Hugo Pinell, who was a close comrade of the late George Jackson, and has been in Pelican Bay's SHU since 1990, joined the hunger strike. Political Prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal issued a recorded statement entitled, "Dying for Sunlight," referring to the prisoners' demand for precious time outside of the SHU's 8x10 concrete, soundproof cells.

A national day of action was called by the coalition for July 9. In San Francisco, a rally of over 250 supporters was joined by an ANSWER-led Libya solidarity rally. The antiwar activists marched from their rally point to the hunger strike demonstration, chanting against state torture and linking the wars abroad to the war at home.

Support rallies and banner drops were organized in Oakland, Chicago, New York, Montreal, Los Angeles, Raleigh, Las Vegas, Philadelphia, and countless other cit-

ies. Supporters organized buses and traveled from all over California to deliver to the CDCR 7500 signatures in support of the hunger strikers.

However, prison officials refused to recognize the five core demands and would not begin negotiations. For the hunger strikers, days without food turned into weeks.

A source with access to medical conditions in the prison stated: "The prisoners are progressing rapidly to the organ-damaging consequences of dehydration. They are not drinking water and have decompensated rapidly. A few have tried to sip water but are so sick that they are vomiting it back up. Some are in renal failure and have been unable to make urine for 3 days. Some are having measured blood sugars in the 30 range, which can be fatal if not treated."

The crisis deepened when the prison began withholding life-saving medications from the hunger strikers. The state also transferred at least 17 of the men at Pelican Bay to Corcoran for supposed medical reasons. They neglected to mention, however, that Corcoran had received the clearance to begin force-feeding the hunger strikers. Luckily, none of the prisoners were subjected to that horrific process.

On July 16, with the world watching, the CDCR presented the Pelican Bay hunger strikers a proposal in the form of a vague statement that it would review its existing policies about the SHU, but it promised no changes. The prisoners unanimously rejected the proposal and continued refusing food.

On the evening of July 20, however, the hunger strikers came to an agreement with the CDCR and called off the hunger strike. The prisoners explained in a letter to supporters that the CDCR had "agreed to accede to a few small requests immediately, as a tangible good faith gesture in support of their assurance that all of our other issues will receive real attention, with meaningful changes being implemented over time.

"They made it clear: such changes would not happen over night, nor would they be made in response to a hunger strike going on."

They explained that the hunger strike at Pelican Bay may be over, but the struggle to end torturous SHU conditions is only beginning! It is clear to everyone involved that, although the hunger strikers did win some gains and managed to increase international scrutiny into America's dungeons, the CDCR did not admit to committing acts of torture, and it will take an army of activists to force real change.

At the time of this writing, the hunger strikers are beginning to recover. Many cannot eat on their own, and supporters are learning of possible serious illnesses brought on by the severe malnutrition, dramatic weight loss, and dehydration. Further, supporters around the state are unclear on whether or not prisoners are continuing the strike at other prisons. There has been some mention of prisoners at Corcoran and Tehachapi, but supporters do not have confirmation.

With direction from the hunger-strike leaders, the coalition and supporters around the country are focusing on the next step, which will be to mobilize forces for Aug. 23, where a hearing on the SHU at Pelican Bay will be held by the Public Safety Committee of the CA State Assembly in Sacramento. Many supporters are focusing on coordinating (inter)national days of action leading up to the legislative hearing periodically throughout the next few weeks.

Those who are interested in coordinating an action in their own city should contact the coalition, who can help to put you in touch with other supporters. The coalition can be reached at prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity@gmail.com or (510) 444-0484, <http://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com>. ■

Ontario mega-quarry arouses opposition

By ERIC KUPKA

An application to dig the largest quarry in Canadian history (and the second largest in North America) in prime agricultural land near Toronto has aroused widespread opposition. According to rabble.ca, the quarry would stretch over 2300 acres and dip 200 feet below the water table—making it deeper than Niagara Falls. Located at the headwaters of important river systems in Melancthon, Ontario, the proposed gravel "mega-quarry" would pump out 600

million litres of water every day, raising important concerns about its effects on the local water supply.

The operation would also see 150 loaded trucks leave the quarry every hour to travel down local roads. This would inevitably create dust, noise, and safety problems for local residents.

One would think that such an unprecedented project would attract rigorous government scrutiny. However, that is not the case. Rather than proceeding through a full-scale environmental assessment under the auspices of the

Ontario Ministry of Environment, the application is currently being reviewed under the laxer and less environmentally focused standards of the Ministry of Natural Resources. This is an easier process for the project owner, The Highland Companies, and the U.S. hedge fund behind it, but one that will fail to fully consider the effects of the quarry on the people and natural life to be forced to live with it.

In response, the local community is mobilizing, and has drawn attention to the quarry in high places. The Leader of

the labour-based Ontario New Democratic Party, Andrea Howarth, plus the Council of Canadians and a host of local politicians have condemned the project. The famed David Suzuki Foundation expressed serious concerns. Grassroots organizing included a five-day march from the provincial legislature in Toronto to Melancthon by 200 concerned citizens. It began, appropriately, on April 22, Earth Day 2011.

Socialists propose an immediate cancellation of the mega-quarry approval process, and urge all concerned Ontarians to add their voice in opposition to this environmentally, economically, and socially destructive project. ■

Norway attack shows dangers from Islamophobia and the far right

(Left) Accused assassin **Ander Behring Breivik** in police custody after court hearing.

(Right) Mass vigil in Oslo for victims of July 25 massacre.



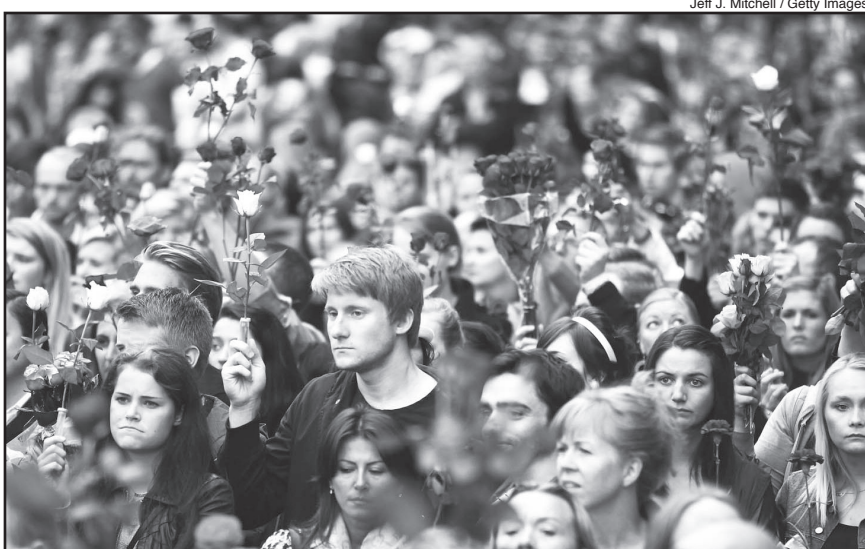
By **JOHN LESLIE**

On July 21, following a devastating bomb attack on government offices in Oslo, a gunman attacked the annual summer camp of the AUF, youth wing of the Norwegian Labour Party. After initial police estimates of more than 90 dead, the death toll has been officially reduced to 76.

The media frenzy in the immediate aftermath of the killings reveals a lot. The media immediately started to speculate about the attack being the work of Muslim terrorists. One “expert” even claimed that the attack was the work of a terrorist group, Ansar al-Jihad al-Alami, or “Helpers of the Global Jihad.” The problem is that the group doesn’t seem to exist, except in the imagination of the so-called expert. Fox News, CNN and other mass media outlets hosted a parade of terrorism “experts” to talk about the “fact” that this was an example of Islamic terrorism, and when reports began to filter in that the attacker was a blond Norwegian, the experts scoffed.

Media outlets seemed unable to explain that the attack was carried out by a right-wing, anti-immigrant, Islamophobe, Anders Behring Breivik. Many media sources have shifted to referring to Breivik as a lone madman, ignoring the political context of the attacks. Breivik has been revealed to have ties to the semi-fascist English Defense League and is an admirer of the Tea Party and Islamophobic bloggers in the United States, like Pam Gellar and David Horowitz.

Breivik’s attack on the AUF was not a random act. His rampage was aimed at what the far right sees as a “Marxist multiculturalism” that is facilitating the takeover of Europe by Muslims. While many rightists in Europe and the U.S. have been careful to distance themselves from the violence of this attack, many have



made excuses for Breivik’s hate. Pat Buchanan, a U.S.-based white nationalist and populist, said that Breivik “may have been right.” Glen Beck likened the AUF summer camp to a “Hitler youth rally”—as if this somehow excused the slaughter.

In the period since 9/11, the mass media and imperialist governments have whipped up a frenzy of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim fervor. In Western Europe, where the number of Muslim immigrants has increased in recent years, the far right has taken up the issue of Islam and the notion that Muslims are a threat to Western Civilization.

This racist and Islamophobic scapegoating has spread to the U.S. as well. The official policy of the U.S. government is tolerance of different cultures and religions, but the reality has been preemptive prosecutions and frame-ups of Muslims. The cases of the Albany Two, the Newburgh Four, and the Fort Dix Five are examples of such frame-up prosecutions, which rely on the testimony of paid informants and, in some cases, on “secret” evidence.

In 2010, the anti-Muslim frenzy reached a boiling point in the United States around the issue of Cordoba House, the Islamic cultural center planned for Lower Manhattan. The ultra-right Tea party and right-wing blogger Pamela Geller and her organization Stop Islamization of America went on a campaign to paint the building of Cordoba House as some sort of conspiracy by radical Muslims. Fox News and the right-wing media took up the drum beat. Cordoba House was framed as a “9/11 Victory Mosque” and a “monument to the 9/11 hijackers.” Hate crimes against mosques and Muslims increased.

far-right politics, has not disappeared, but it has faded to the background.

Writing in the Fourth International on-line journal, *International Viewpoint*, Enzo Traverso has these observations about the new populist far right in Europe: “The decline of the fascist tradition is giving way to the rise of a far right of a new kind, whose ideology takes on board the changes of the twenty-first century ... the abandonment of the cult of the state in favor of a vision of the neo-liberal world centered on the criticism of the Welfare State, the tax revolt, economic deregulation and the valorization of individual freedoms, opposed to any official interference...”

What are the lessons we should draw from the Norway attack? The labor movement and all socialist and progressive forces must unequivocally and uncompromisingly oppose Islamophobia and racism, and it must actively defend the democratic rights of Muslims and immigrants. We cannot rely on cops or the capitalist state to defend us from fascist and right-wing attacks. Only mass mobilizations, working-class political independence, and collective self-defense offer real protection against the far right.

The growth of anti-immigrant vigilante groups (Minutemen, etc.) and the ultra-right Tea Party means that this is not just a European danger. Recently, Tea Party supporters broke up a picnic in a public park attended by members of the liberal group, Move-On. These types of goon-squad tactics and the rhetoric by Tea Party politicians about “Second Amendment” solutions point to an increasing impatient and volatile right wing. ■

... Budget crisis

(continued from page 1)

67 rather than 65, and cost-of-living adjustments will be scaled down, providing additional billions to shore up the coffers of the boss class.

Of course, the deficit could be eliminated entirely by taxing corporations and the rich, or even by eliminating the military budget, but this is a non-issue in the framework of capitalist/imperialist politics today.

This new debt level will mark another historic high, rising from the present \$14.3 trillion to some \$15.2 trillion. And this in turn will, until the next time, avert the default of the world’s strongest (though crisis-ridden) economy—a default that would undoubtedly unhinge the world financial system.

The new debt will be paid for by other reluctant governments and assorted financial institutions that buy U.S. bonds. That is, U.S. IOUs will be exchanged for “real” money or credit to allow American capitalism to pay its bills.

It is far from clear what nations would be interested in buying U.S. dollar-denominated debt when the massive printing of U.S. dollars, coupled by the massive issuance of Treasury certificates, has nothing to do with an increase in the production of new commodities in the United States. China, the largest U.S. debt holder at \$1.5 trillion, and virtually all the major capitalist powers, have already expressed alarm about the potential for the U.S. debt they hold to rapidly lose its value.

Congressional hoopla aside, including Republican Tea Party rhetoric about a balanced budget and the limited Democratic Party protests over Obama’s “concessions,” the deal cut between Obama and Republican House Speaker John Boehner, between the ruling-class representatives of different corporate interests, was solidified quite early. The July 26 *New York Times* made no bones about it: “A full picture of the shelved [temporarily] compromise shows how close the two leaders were and

“Let’s make a DEAL on that money you owe us...”



how far each was willing to go in confronting their parties’ sacred cows—Mr. Obama on entitlement spending and Mr. Boehner on taxes. On paper about \$59 billion in spending cuts separated them, a relative pittance in terms of projected spending for the decade. Most of that difference was over Medicaid; Mr. Boehner wanted \$40 billion more in cuts than Mr. Obama.”

“If I were there,” declared Mickey Edwards, a House Republican leader in the Reagan and first Bush administrations, “I would say, My God, declare victory.”

Obama and Boehner agreed on the essentials, over \$2 trillion in cuts over the next 10 years. Their banking and corporate advisers are currently scouring the fine print of the tax codes wherein billions in gifts, grants, and tax exemptions for the rich are hidden from 99.999 percent of the population. While the two-party, two-bit charade players prattled on with endless press conferences and statements of fidelity to their “no tax increases” or “no more cuts to entitlements,” the serious but unseen players are all agreed that corporate America’s crisis must

be borne by the working class as a whole.

The phenomenon is repeated the world over, as the world economic crisis ever more compels the corporate elite to deepen their incursions on every aspect of working-class life.

A July 22 *New York Times* article entitled “European Leaders Back Broad Plan to Rescue Greece” was explicit on this question: “The lack of a solution to Greece [on the verge of a catastrophic default] has also rattled financial markets, ultimately forcing European leaders to act this week. On the eve of the summit meeting, Nicolas Sarkozy of France and Angela Merkel of Germany met in Berlin along with the president of the European Central Bank, and came to a general agreement that euro zone taxpayers would have to cover the rescue costs to preserve the integrity of the single European currency. How German and French citizens will react to this is unclear.”

Just as Obama’s bipartisan policies bailed out U.S. banks and corporations to the tune of \$16 trillion since the crisis began, their European counterparts rendered the same service to their corporate masters. In all cases, in every country, working people have been made to pay the price of capitalism’s failure—the failure of a system whose internal and inherent contradictions, including never-ending global competition for shrinking markets and falling profit rates, leave it no choice but to counter its downfall by squeezing the lifeblood out of workers everywhere. There is no other explanation for the massive and growing unemployment, for the obliteration of pensions, massive foreclosures, fierce attacks on public education, union busting, voiding of union contracts, degradation of the environment, and more.

Contrary to popular opinion, it is not greed that drives the capitalist system forward, but the never-ending quest to accumulate more capital or perish in the face of competitors. The latter are ever reduced in numbers, as the weaker are driven from the market place, and the

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WikiLeaks lifts lid on U.S. role in Haiti

Documents released by WikiLeaks to the left-of-center Haitian weekly *Haiti Liberté*, in partnership with *The Nation* magazine, unveils a cozy U.S. relationship with Haiti's reactionary, corrupt elite. They also offer insight into the bipartisan U.S./UN occupation mislabeled a "humanitarian intervention." The revelations show that U.S. policy has changed little since the founding of the world's first Black republic in 1804.

The 1918 WikiLeaks cables cover the period beginning April 17, 2003, nearly 10 months before a CIA-backed rightist coup on Feb. 29, 2004, against Haiti's elected reformist president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. A U.S.-led UN force of 9000 soldiers occupied the country and sent Aristide into exile. The occupation allowed the coup to consolidate its power and repress his Fanmi Lavalas (FL) party and all worker-peasant movements. Some 3000 Haitians died under the regime.

Cables from the U.S. Embassy, which might have directly implicated the U.S. in the 2004 coup, started in March 2005, although there is one cable from March 2004. The occupation force became known as MINUSTAH (UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti).

The U.S. militarily occupied Haiti in 1915, 1994, 2004, and again in 2010 in the aftermath of the deadly Jan. 12 earthquake. The WikiLeaks cables end on Feb. 28, 2010, about a month after the quake devastated the capital, Port au Prince, and the surrounding area.

In 2009, thousands of students, workers, and others demonstrated in the streets of Port au Prince demanding a minimum wage increase from \$1.75 a day to a mere \$5 a day. WikiLeaks documents show U.S. officials were on the side of Haiti's international sweatshops.

"[T]he U.S. embassy in Haiti worked closely with factory owners contracted by Levi's, Hanes, and Fruit of the Loom to aggressively block a paltry minimum wage increase for Haitian assembly zone workers," wrote *Haiti Liberté*. In the end, the minimum wage was increased to only \$3 a day for assembly workers, \$5 a day for all others; later increased to \$5 a day and \$6.25 a day respectively in October 2010.

Keeping a lid on Haiti's explosive mix of coups, inequality, repression, and widespread malnutrition (unemployment exceeds 80%) requires repression. WikiLeaks revealed that the economic elite, whose support of CIA-backed coups was essential to U.S. policy, was arming police into private armies. A U.S. Embassy cable by then U.S. Ambassador to Haiti



(Left) U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive sign memo to support Haiti "economic development," Sept. 19, 2010.

James Foley was fully aware of these developments and warned "against private delivery of arms" to the Haitian National Police. "Some business owners have already begun to purchase weapons and ammunition from the street and distribute them to local police officials in exchange for regular patrols."

Fritz Mevs, one of the richest Haitians, told the U.S. Embassy that the president of the Haitian Chamber of Commerce, Reginald Boulos, had "distributed arms to the police and had called on others to do so in order to provide cover to his own actions." The elite worried about rebellious pro-Aristide strongholds in the Port au Prince slums Bel Air and Cité Soleil. Boulos currently sits on the board of Bill Clinton's Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC), which controls the spending of billions donated to rebuild Haiti after the quake. Boulos is a close friend of the new Haitian president, Michel Martelly, who assumed office in May after a rigged election last November, which excluded Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas party (FL), Haiti's largest party. Martelly is pro-coup, pro-U.S., with many ties to the old Duvalier family dictatorship (1957-1986) and its paramilitary thugs.

Also on Clinton's IHRC board is Gary Lissade, the lead counsel for General Raoul Cedras, the leader of the bloody 1991 coup, during his negotiations with Aristide in 1993. Lissade, a prominent right-winger, is part of a "cabal," says Mevs, of what Foley labeled "a small nexus of drug-dealers and political insiders that control a network of dirty cops and gangs."

On July 6, 2005, there was a massacre by MINUSTAH forces, mostly Brazilian. MINUSTAH opened fire on Cité Soleil, unleashing 22,000 rounds of ammunition. Dozens were killed, but the official toll was six. "It remains unclear how aggressive MINUSTAH was, though 22,000 rounds is a large amount of ammunition to have killed only six people," wrote then U.S. Ambassador James Foley in a July 26, 2005, Embassy cable obtained by Professor Keith Yearman through a FOIA request.

The UN claimed it killed Aristide loyalist and "gang leader Dred Wilme and five of his associates," while noting that "at St. Joseph's hospital near Cité Soleil, Doctors Without Borders reported receiving 26 gunshot victims from Cité Soleil on July 6, of whom 20 were women and at least one was a child."

In August Foley was praising the Brazilians in another cable (obtained by Yearman's FOIA requests) entitled "Brazil Shows Backbone in Bel-Air." Since 2004, Brazil has had the largest contingent of troops in Haiti, after redeployments of US troops to Iraq and Afghanistan. Socialists demand, "U.S./UN out of Haiti, now!"

The U.S. response to the Jan. 12 quake was to dispatch 22,000 troops to occupy Haiti, officially a UN mission. Scandalously, U.S. personnel prevented the arrival of aircraft carrying private emergency medical personnel like Doctors Without Borders and Cuban medical teams, for example. The top U.S. priority was suppressing non-existent food riots. (For more see the February and March 2010

issues of *Socialist Action*.) WikiLeaks reveals how U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, stung by media reports on the blockage of emergency medical aid by the U.S. military, ordered staff to track down "irresponsible journalists" worldwide to "get the story straight." U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Merten spoke of a "gold rush" to describe the post-quake atmosphere for U.S. corporations, lured by billions in international aid.

The 2011 legislative and presidential elections, postponed in 2010 by the earthquake, were organized by President René Preval, an ex-protegé of the exiled president who, like his mentor, had supported U.S. occupations. The election was widely viewed as a fraud, even by the U.S. embassy. Millions of dollars went to anti-FL parties from the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, two tentacles of the CIA-linked National Endowment for Democracy.

Diplomats at a Dec. 1, 2009, meeting of representatives of the European Union, United Nations, Brazil, Canada, Spain, and the U.S. expressed reservations about the sham election. Nevertheless they agreed to provide funds for the vote since "the international community has too much invested in Haiti's democracy to walk away from the upcoming elections, despite its imperfections," according to a U.S. cable (HL 5/25/11-5/30/11). A mere 23% of eligible Haitians voted last November.

Earlier, President Obama had successfully pressured the South African government to not permit the exiled Aristide to return to Haiti during the election. Aristide finally returned on March 18.

In reality, there cannot be "fair" elections under an occupation, despite Fanmi Lavalas' willingness to run if not for its exclusion. Its lack of principled opposition to occupation reflects the on-again, off-again support for interventions within Aristide's reformist camp, a far cry from the fiercely independent Haitian revolutionaries who overthrew French slavery and colonialism in 1804. Haiti is in need of another revolution. ■

... Budget

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remaining consolidated and increasingly monopolized behemoths battle each other on a world scale at the expense of all humanity.

In the days ahead, tax codes will be adjusted to more than compensate for what appears to be an agreement to allow the Bush-era tax breaks for the rich to expire. Nothing will be done to repatriate the trillions of dollars in profits amassed by corporations that have off-shored their multi-national operations or changed the address of their corporate headquarters to avoid taxes outright.

U.S. capitalists, who today sit on \$2 trillion in cash, decline to invest in U.S. industry because they can buy cheap labor in the poor nations of the world for a fraction of the price. And even here, whatever gains are made by one corporation over its competitors by shifting production to low-wage nations are soon counteracted by the competition following suit and thus negating whatever initial gains were made.

Workers have no interest in the orchestrated congressional debates about raising the debt ceiling or not. This is a debate among the exploiters as to how best to advance their interests against ours. When

the sound and fury generated by the fake debates subsides, whatever new funds raised by raising the debt ceiling of a failing capitalism will go to the corporate bullies, not to working people.

Our future rests in the ability of U.S. working people to defend their living standards through their own reconstructed institutions—i.e., a rebuilt and qualitatively expanded and democratic trade-union movement, capable of collectively challenging the bosses at the point of production. An effective fightback will require a total and absolute break with the twin parties of the ruling-class offensive.

Working people, in alliance with all the oppressed and exploited, need a mass Labor Party, based on fighting trade unions and massive mobilizations to reverse the terrible setbacks imposed by the corporate plunderers with the collaboration of the "labor lieutenants of capitalism," that is, the union bureaucracy, whose interests are ever more intertwined with the so-called lesser-evil Democrats and divorced from those of the rank and file.

The best fighters will today be more alert than ever to working-class militants whose politics are steeped in the revolutionary socialist traditions based on class independence, solidarity with all the oppressed, and a will to struggle for a new world. ■



The Tanya McDowell Case and the Fight Against the New Jim Crow

A *Socialist Action Forum*. Thursday, Aug. 18, 7:30 p.m. La Paloma Sabanera, 405 Capitol Ave., Hartford, Conn.

Through the recession, Black and Latino families have been hit the hardest leading to the highest disparity of wealth in a quarter century. Unemployment rates for minorities are twice as high as those of whites. The average net worth of a white person is 20 times higher than that of Blacks.

In Norwalk, Conn., Tanya McDowell, a homeless mother, has been charged with first-degree larceny and faces up to 20 years in prison and a \$15,000 fine as

a result of enrolling her son in her babysitter's school district. Prosecutors claim that McDowell "stole education" and should have enrolled her five-year-old son in the significantly poorer urban district of Bridgeport, where McDowell had last resided.

Civil rights leaders, activists, and parents' groups across the country have mobilized to defend McDowell.

Should a family be criminalized for trying to receive a decent education? For decades the "War on Drugs" and the prison industrial complex have targeted communities of color for mass incarceration. The McDowell case is just the most recent example of the institutionalized racism that pervades our society and divides workers.

Hear Tanya McDowell's attorney, Darnell Crosland, and his associate from the NAACP provide insights into this controversial legal battle.

Join us for a lively discussion on how we can mobilize to defend McDowell and fight to end the New Jim Crow! ■

Workers in Egypt

Key to Saving the Arab Spring

By ANDREW POLLACK

Throughout the Middle East and North Africa, the U.S. is using every weapon in its arsenal—military, diplomatic, financial, etc.—to try to turn the Arab Spring into a Washington Winter, an endless night of continued poverty enforced by dictatorships.

But Egypt's workers, who initiated the process leading to the mass Arab revolt with their strikes five years ago, have moved back to the fore. Protesters have returned to Tahrir Square in Cairo, with a continuous presence since July 8. Militant actions and strikes have also been held in Suez, Alexandria, and elsewhere as a result of months of stonewalling of demands for economic justice, political rights, and prosecution of corrupt and murderous regime figures.

Broad coalitions of labor and revolutionary groups backing the Tahrir sit-ins issued statements calling for prosecution of Mubarak regime figures and all those involved in the killing of the martyrs of the revolution and the corruption of the regime. They demanded an end to military courts and freedom for the thousands jailed by the military.

They also demanded the revocation of the anti-strike and anti-demonstration law, recovery of the nation's stolen money inside and outside the country, a rise in the minimum wage and a cap on executives' salaries, and linking wages with prices.

But the military has made clear its intention to maintain its grip on power on behalf of Egypt's wealthy. Since President Hosni Mubarak's ouster, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has combined token reforms, meaningless cabinet shuffles, and selected firings and prosecutions of corrupt and criminal officials with repression, imprisonment, and warnings to the country's workers that strikes would be crushed.

As a result, illusions in the military, based on its having left the dirty work in January and February largely to the police, are quickly dissipating. Growing numbers of workers in Egypt realize that the real showdown with the old regime, and the ruling class it protects, is yet to come.

The military is fully aware of this change in consciousness and watches with fear the growing return to the squares. This means that the danger is very real that they will crack down soon, and hard, against the protests.

The military has turned for help increasingly to the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood, which only late and reluctantly joined the protests in January and February, and is now joining the chorus that is howling denunciations of workers who dare to strike. Other voices in this choir are those of major media and business figures, who blame workers fighting for long-delayed justice and equality for the economy's supposed downturn. (Fortunately, the youth of the Brotherhood have split off in repugnance toward their leadership's betrayal of the revolution.)

The July 17 *New York Times* reported that the Egyptian military has openly declared it will maintain itself in power come what may, issuing a declaration giving it "a broad mandate to intercede in Egyptian politics. ... The military plans to adopt the document on its own, before any election, referendum or constitution sets up a civilian authority."

Egypt's military is fueled by \$1.3 billion a year given by the United States, making it second only to Israel as a recipient of U.S. military aid. (This compares to only \$250 million in economic aid—which, of course, as with all aid to neocolonial countries, is itself skewed towards business-friendly projects.) Yet SCAF has been baiting its opponents with allegations of foreign funding!

And this is the same military whose head, Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, met on July 26 with General



Pedro Costa / AFP / Getty Images

U.S. aid to the Egyptian military is intended to guarantee support for U.S. policies in the region — and for Israel.

Carter Ham, commander of the U.S. Africa Command to talk about how to continue cooperation with the United States vis-à-vis Israel and to expand cooperation throughout Africa.

The masses of Egypt know that U.S. aid to the military is intended both to maintain Egypt's wealthy in power, and to guarantee Egyptian support for U.S. policies in the region—first and foremost support for Zionism. They have also not forgotten that the tear-gas canisters fired at them during the January-February revolt were made in the U.S.

The same issue of *The Times* reporting on SCAF's intention to stay in power profiled in its Business Section a program jointly sponsored by the U.S. State Department, the Agency for International Development, and the Chamber of Commerce, along with internet corporation heads, to foster "entrepreneurs" who will supposedly solve Egypt's unemployment problem.

This program is, of course, just one example of the broader effort to maintain U.S. economic dominance, an effort analyzed by Adam Hanieh in his article "Egypt's 'orderly transition'?" International aid and the rush to structural adjustment."

Hanieh describes how Obama has reshuffled a small part of Egypt's massive debt to the United States, a maneuver that comes with the usual strings attached, i.e. IMF/World Bank-style demands for greater openness to Western corporations and less spending on workers' needs. The net result will be greater—not less—

indebtedness, more privatization and deregulation, and greater opening of Egypt's markets and investment opportunities to Western corporations and banks. This at a time when demands are flourishing for the renationalization of privatized companies and more, not less, public provision of jobs and services

Mass movement revived

An article in *Ahram Online* by Mostafa Ali describes a visit to Tahrir Square and the revival of self-organization for security, sustenance, and health care, to give haircuts or

to provide artwork. He notes that the current round of occupation of Tahrir was a reaction to police use of tear gas to disperse a peaceful protest by families of the martyrs of the uprising.

Ali describes the Egyptian media's attempt to characterize those sitting in as "wreaking havoc, shutting bridges, attacking our army and on and on." He also mentions two tents in the square used by TV and radio workers "involved in a campaign to purge state media outlets of corrupt managers who forced them to tow government propaganda for years."

This dialectic between workplace struggles and the broader political movement is superbly analyzed by Anne Alexander in her article, "The growing social soul of Egypt's democratic revolution," published in the British journal *International Socialism*. Alexander shows how the current stage of struggle in Egypt mirrors the process described by Rosa Luxemburg after Russia's 1905 Revolution—that is, how a nationwide general strike became the inspiration for struggles in individual workplaces, which in turn strengthened national political struggles.

Luxemburg wrote: "Every great political mass action, after it has attained its political highest point, breaks up into a mass of economic strikes. ... With the spreading, clarifying and involution of the political struggle, the economic struggle not only does not recede, but extends, organizes and becomes involved in equal measure. Between the two there is the most complete reciprocal action."

"In a word: the economic struggle is the transmitter from one political center to another; the political struggle is the periodic fertilization of the soil for the economic struggle. Cause and effect here continually change places; and thus the economic and the political factor in the

period of the mass strike, now widely removed, completely separated or even mutually exclusive, as the theoretical plan would have them, merely form the two interlacing sides of the proletarian class struggle in Russia. And their unity is precisely the mass strike."

The key task of revolutionaries immersed in such a dialectic, Alexander points out, drawing on Leon Trotsky's analysis of 1905 as well as Luxemburg's, was to reinforce this dialectic, to make the ties stronger, more political, more deeply rooted in mass organizations, so that each pole of the dynamic reinforces the other in a building process ending in the seizure of power by the working class.

In contrast, without the development of this dynamic, the revolution as a whole must fail, a point at the heart of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, which made clear that the bourgeoisie was no longer capable or even interested in leading a democratic revolution (i.e. one that fights for the kind of political reforms demanded in Tahrir Square, Suez, and Alexandria).

Further, should the revolution fail, for lack of a strong enough bourgeoisie to take the reins (especially given its dependence on imperialism), the most likely regime to come to power would be a Bonapartist one, i.e. one loyal to capitalism but relying on military strength to substitute for an incompetent and impotent capitalist class. And in an imperialist world, such a Bonapartist regime inevitably follows the dictates of Western capital (however much, as in Syria, Libya or pre-invasion Iraq, the Bonapartist dictators bend to mass pressure and issue fake anti-imperialist demagoguery and grant haven and funding to resistance groups).

This stark choice—between a thoroughgoing proletarian-led revolution, and a regression to dependence on imperialism (and its local cop, Zionism), supervised by a Bonapartist regime—is exactly the one confronting Egypt.

To illustrate the Egyptian version of the dynamic

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outlined by Luxemburg, Alexander gives numerous examples from various industries in which workers have ousted their boss and taken partial or full control of their workplaces to run them democratically. These include museum employees, airport workers, bus drivers and mechanics, nurses, porters and doctors, railroad and textile workers, civil servants in the Ministry of Finance, and so on.

Given the interpenetration of state and society under Mubarak—i.e., every corporate executive, plant manager, or government office supervisor was a craven lackey of the central regime and dependent on it for his or her job—the struggle of workers in their offices and factories to remove the old bosses also strikes a political blow at the remnants of the regime which still run the country. This, again, is why these struggles must be coordinated, solidarity spread between them, and political demands formulated that make explicit the common threads between workplace and nationwide struggles.

That is exactly the task that the Democratic Workers Party (DWP), and the Revolutionary Socialists who lead it, have set themselves. An example of how they seek to do so is by broadening participation in the struggle for a nationwide minimum wage and for caps on bosses' salaries. This relates back to the anger at rising food prices, which was a key spark of the revolution, while building on individual struggles for higher wages in particular workplaces.

Another example of this interaction between the local and the national came in the doctors' strike, the first since 1951 and, says Alexander, the biggest single instance of coordinated national strike action since the revolution, "as it was observed by 65 to 75% of hospitals in Cairo and Giza, and 90% of hospitals in the provinces. Although the initial motor for the strike was doctors' own demands for better pay and conditions, the activists leading the strike ... argued for and won the position that the strike should articulate wider demands for the improvement of the health system."

A crucial set of organizations furthering this revolutionary dialectic are the Popular Committees to Defend the Revolution. First formed to provide security and to organize defense against police attacks during the initial uprising, they are now organizing neighborhoods to demand local services, the right to elect local officials, to fight inflation, etc. And they do so with the same democratic methods found in the new workplace committees and independent unions. The committees have also held national gatherings and started a newspaper to coordinate strategy.

As a means of uniting and further radicalizing all these struggles, the DWP promotes its own program. Key planks in it include "the restoration of national dignity in the face of Zionist-American projects in the region; re-nationalizing the looted companies and land, the development of their administration with popular oversight, and expansion of the public sector through investment in strategic projects; creation of a constitution that serves human rights, citizenship, and freedom of expression, and the establishment of a parliamentary republic recognizing the freedom of political parties, trade unions, the media and based on the election of all leadership positions starting from local government (the election of village mayors, town mayors and governors) to all educational and research institutions and public services; development of the health service, education, and housing away from the logic of profit; raise the minimum wage to the level that would meet basic needs (at least 1500 pounds) with a link to prices."

Revolutionaries have also been forced to seek leadership of struggles that on the surface have no connection to class issues, such as battles against recent sectarian attacks by some Salafi Islamists on Christian individuals and institutions. But it doesn't take a rocket scientist to see the benefits accruing to Egypt's rulers and their military enforcers from such divide-and-conquer attacks.

The Salafists' reactionary role, of course, does not stem from their Islamic beliefs. In fact, participants in the convention of the Revolutionary Socialists speak of the widespread participation of devout Muslims in the front ranks of workers' struggles. It is a product rather of the Salafists' (and the Muslim Brotherhood's) class composition, which includes predominantly urban bourgeois (especially in leadership or funding positions), along with traditional and modern petty bourgeois, and large sections of the poor. Such a composition is the classic recipe for an organization that vacillates between the pressures of those above



Khalil Hamra / AP

U.S. supporters of the Egyptian revolution must be ready to mobilize in the event of a military crackdown.

and below—and ultimately turns toward the former, at least in the absence of a working-class rebellion strong enough to sidetrack or split it and thereby win over its poorer members.

On the verge of a crackdown?

Despite their savage attacks, the military has still refrained from wholesale armed assaults on protesters and strikers, and has on occasion even backed down in the face of popular demands such as around prosecution of the regime's worst criminals. But such concessions have been made grudgingly and often, in the end, withdrawn.

The military is fully aware of the revolt spreading throughout factories, offices and neighborhoods, and know that an all-out assault would do more than anything else to reunite the country's working masses and lead to a final battle—one for which the military might not yet feel itself ready. On the other hand, it cannot afford to wait too long as the mutually reinforcing dynamic of struggles continue to grow.

Evidence that a crackdown may come sooner rather than later appeared in late July and the first days of August. On July 22, military police beat protesters in Alexandria demanding quicker prosecutions. The next day, a march of tens of thousands on SCAF headquarters in Cairo was similarly attacked. Socialist blogger Hossam El-Hamalawy reported that protesters chanted "beautifully rhymed slogans" (the lyrical creativity of protesters is taken as a point of pride throughout the region). They denounced Tantawi, SCAF, and police torture, and called for social justice, bread and civil liberties.

Wrote El-Hamalawy: "As we approached Abbasiya [the part of Cairo where SCAF headquarters is], we started receiving news that the military police and the army special forces have blocked the road by the Nour Mosque with machine-gun-mounted armored vehicles and barbed wires. We also received news there were 'thugs' preparing Molotov cocktails and swords awaiting us. (The army had been inciting against the march in the days before, accusing protesters of being thugs and foreign agents.)"

They soon confronted rows of soldiers and Interior Ministry security forces. As protesters stood their ground, men with swords and knives attacked, and stones rained down on them. Clashes went on for hours. "We were besieged: the army and the police on one side, while the thugs blocking our way back to Tahrir. Scores were injured and detained."

And as we go to press, on Aug. 1, soldiers have cleared Tahrir Square of the family members of revolutionary martyrs and others who had set up a protest encampment there. Several protesters were injured.



Amir Nabil / AP

(Above) Protesters fill Tahrir Square on May 20, protesting delays in trial of the deposed dictator Hosni Mubarak.

(Below) Over 800 protesters were killed by Mubarak's security forces. Photos of some of the martyrs are displayed outside courthouse in Cairo.

We can't know for sure when the more general crackdown will happen. If it occurs soon, U.S. supporters of the Egyptian Revolution must be ready to mobilize. If, in contrast, the final confrontation is delayed for weeks or months, we must use the intervening time to educate supporters of justice and equality in the U.S. of the need to support our sisters and brothers in Egypt, to strengthen the ties first forged when workers in Madison, Wisconsin, rebelled.

Our responsibility in this respect comes not only out of solidarity, but especially because we live in the country whose military, economic, and political power is the main prop of the Egyptian regime.

And such solidarity is crucial not only for Egypt. That country, like Tunisia, has had the most advanced organizing by workers, which, combined with the size of its working class, makes it socially and politically key for the region. A setback in these two countries would demoralize those fighting for freedom and social justice in the rest of the region.

But the Egyptian example is precious to saving the Arab Spring also because of the working-class-based political example it sets. This is an example sorely needed in other countries where, despite heroic turnouts Friday after Friday for months on end, clearly articulated political alternatives to the ruling regimes have taken shape slowly and incompletely (although it is encouraging to see the persistence of neighborhood-based committees in Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere, which have repeatedly defied calls for compromise by "official" opposition parties).

The worst example, of course, is in Libya, where a mass uprising has virtually disappeared as an explicitly pro-imperialist "opposition," led by middle-class professionals and ex-Gadhafi figures, is collaborating with the genocidal U.S./NATO bombardment of the country.

Supporters of the Arab Revolution must organize and mobilize to demand: U.S. Hands Off Egypt! End All U.S. Aid to Egypt's Military! U.S. Corporations and Banks: Hands off the Egyptian Economy! Cancel Egypt's Debt! End the Criminal War Against Libya! Solidarity with the heroic workers of Egypt! ■

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

Get with the program, Andrea

By BARRY WEISLEDER

When voters in Ontario, Canada's most populous province, go to the polls on Oct. 6, will they reward the party with the "coolest" leader, or the one with the best policies?

Andrea Horwath, Leader of the labour-based New Democratic Party of Ontario, seems to be aiming at "cool," sadly at the expense of feminism. To deflect media criticism that she is keeping much of the NDP election platform under wraps, Horwath quipped, "I'm a woman—I know you don't give it up all at once." Later, she pledged to "balance the budget on high heels."

Many women are not amused. In any case, mildly sexist jokes are no substitute for a Workers' Agenda. Neither is a platform that emphasizes "Making life affordable" and "Live within our means." Instead of aspartame to make the capitalist medicine go down, working people crave an alternative. Socialist policies are that alternative.

In the first place, survival is the issue, not just "affordability." The lack of secure, decent-paying jobs, the mounting debt weighing down workers, the growing scourge of homelessness and disease, against a backdrop of environmental degradation and wars of occupation, show that measures against capitalist power and privilege are sorely needed.

Capital and the rich should pay for the crises their system creates. The Ontario NDP should campaign to eliminate the HST, not just remove it from hydro and home heating. Freezing prices at the gas pump and at the transit fare box would be commendable, but should be part of a plan to nationalize Big Oil and Gas. That way mega-profits from the resource sector could be invested in green energy alternatives and adequate funding for mass public transportation.

Job creation is a top priority. It will not come primar-



ily from concessions to small business. It will come from government action to create, or operate, existing industries democratically and in the public interest. Corporate tax giveaways should be reversed, not just halted. U.S. Steel in Hamilton should be nationalized under workers' and community control. The same should be done to bad bosses and runaway employers like IQT Solutions in Oshawa.

Health care, including drugs and eye care, should be exclusively public and non-profit. So should education. It ought to be free through university, with no public funding for private or religious schools. Universally accessible, quality education can be financed by a revamped, steeply graduated tax system that targets high incomes, speculators, corporate profits, and huge inheritances.

In view of deepening food, debt, and ecological crises (featuring rampant floods, wild fires, drought, nuclear fall-out), now is the time to conscript big wealth for system change. "Balancing the budget" on the backs of workers, farmers, women, youths, and seniors is not

what's needed.

Greece is our inspiration, not for its austerity measures, but for its workers fighting back. This fight is continuing across Europe, North Africa, Latin America, and beyond.

Capping CEO salaries and halting the use of consultants at Queen's Park, as the NDP demands, would be good *mini-steps*. But the party should be talking about slashing CEO salaries and democratizing crown corporations and government ministries.

While calling for a full, public, union-led enquiry into all aspects of the June 2010 G-20 Summit planning and policing, we demand a radical reduction of expenditures on policing, on weapons and surveillance equipment. Stop state litigation against indigenous peoples, unions, women's organizations striving for justice in the workplace, and climate justice seekers.

It is wonderful that Andrea Horwath and the Ontario NDP are campaigning to form a government. We may benefit from the "orange wave" still rippling from the May 2 federal election tsunami. But because opinion polls show the Oct. 6 vote could produce a minority Conservative government, it is critical that the NDP pledge now that it will not enter into a coalition government with the Liberals or with any capitalist party.

The New Democratic Party, as Ontario's official opposition or as government, should fight for a Workers' Agenda, for eco-socialist measures, to make capital pay for its crisis and for the needed environmental clean-up. It should fight to make quality education and health care a right for all Ontarians. Our task is not to make capitalism work better for the rich, but to establish a democratic socialist alternative in the interests of the vast majority. ■

Get Well, Jack

Supporters of Socialist Action, like New Democrats and working people across Canada and Quebec, were very saddened to learn on July 25 that federal party Leader Jack Layton faces a new battle against cancer, which has forced him to take a temporary leave from his position. We wish Jack a full and speedy recovery. We look forward to working with him again soon, and for many years to come.

OPSEU mobilizes public workers with 'pink slip' day

By JULIUS ARSCOTT

Vice President, OPSEU Local 532

TORONTO—The attack on public sector workers in Ontario is in full swing. On July 14, 274 Ontario Public Service Employees' Union (OPSEU) members received notice that they would be "surplused."

This is the largest wave of layoffs since the dark days of former Tory Premier Mike Harris. The Ontario Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty declared that 1900 full-time jobs would be cut from the Ontario Public Service (OPS) by March 31, 2012.

Public-service workers are pawns in

a political game. We are victims of the business-led austerity drive in Canada, spurred by the global capitalist crisis that erupted with the economic crash in 2008. Activists in OPSEU, the largest provincial public sector union in Canada, asked OPS members to wear pink on July 14. "Pink Slip Day" was designed to raise solidarity and to show the bosses that we are organizing.

Local 532, which includes workers at the Ministry of the Environment, took it one step further by conducting an information picket at the busy Yonge and St. Clair corridor in Toronto. We distributed hundreds of leaflets describing the effects of cuts to public services. Union

members and the general public responded well to the information.

Ontarians overwhelmingly support strong public services. But the pink slips delivered to members resulted in the elimination of the Drinking Water Lead Inspection Programme. The government cut front-line water inspectors who test municipal drinking water systems.

The cuts also impact some of the most vulnerable people in our society. For example, the Ministry of Community and Social Services will stop delivering Special Services At Home by March 31, 2012. This program supports adults with developmental disabilities who, upon leaving the school system, wish to continue

to live in the community, usually with their family.

Labour activists should begin to plan actions to mobilize our members and stop the austerity measures. Only mass action by workers can defeat the austerity drive. A huge rally in front of the Ontario Legislature at Queens Park would be a good next step. Members of other unions should be invited to participate. Further actions should include walk-outs and/or extended lunch breaks in the workplace.

At regional OPSEU gatherings we often hear rank-and-file members say, "We need leadership," and we hear union officials say, "Tell us what to do." It's time to break this vicious circle and plan to take some concrete, broad protest actions now.

Resurgence of LGBT left in Toronto

By JOHN WILSON

Events in Greater Toronto Area (GTA) queer communities over the last year strongly suggest a resurgence in grassroots struggles and campaigns. Taking inspiration from the history of the earlier gay liberation movement, there is increasing resistance to the assimilationist and opportunist direction of the (largely self-appointed) LGBT "leadership."

Resistance surfaced spectacularly during the run-up to Pride week (2010) last year, when Pride Toronto (PT) abjectly caved in to pro-Zionist attacks on the participation of Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) in the annual Pride March. Initially, Pride bureaucrats tried to impose a process in which signs and slogans would be vetted in advance.

This stance produced a storm of protest, including a large community meeting of around 400, which founded the Pride Coalition for Free Speech. This first attempt at censorship was discarded. But on May 26, citing attacks on city Pride funding by right-wing media and politicians, PT held a press conference to announce that any reference to "Israeli Apartheid" would be banned. Outside the PT office, 150 protesters organized by QuAIA loudly demonstrated. It was

an impressive turnout on short notice, on a weekday. Following the demonstration, many present and past honorees of Pride publicly declined or returned their awards. PT eventually rescinded its decision. Large contingents from both QuAIA and the free speech coalition marched in the parade.

Following Pride 2010, PT set up a "community consultation" process to deflect growing criticism of its bureaucratic and high-handed practices. True to form, the process was transparently skewed so that the result would not be too embarrassing. So much so that Queer Ontario (QO) decided to boycott the process, present its own recommendations and seek to meet directly with the PT board.

This year, QuAIA decided not to march, to avoid giving city hall reactionaries and pro-Zionists a pretext to cut Pride funding (and presumably, in the event that funding was cut, to blunt any smear campaign that it was all their fault.) QuAIA didn't march, but did unfurl a large banner from the top of the Wellesley St. subway station: "Support Palestinian Queers/Boycott Israeli Tourism."

This act enraged right-wing and homophobic city councillor Giorgio Mammoliti, as did anti-apartheid signs and pro-Palestinian chants in the Dyke March the

previous day. The Dyke procession is a separate event from the Pride Parade, organized by women independently. Given to clownish and demagogic stunts, Mammoliti videotaped the Dyke March, allegedly to collect "evidence" to support his fund-cutting campaign!

More significantly, the previous weekend saw the first Stonewall march, attended by at least 1000 participants (see article in last month's *Socialist Action*). For years people fed up with the increasingly corporatized and bureaucratic official Pride had talked about creating an alternative event, more community-oriented and in the spirit of the original Stonewall rebellion. Since PT had vacated that weekend to move Pride to the first weekend in July, organizers seized the opportunity, drawing impressive numbers of younger people, women, transgendered people, and minorities.

The most encouraging trend has been the growth and development of Queer Ontario. (Although centred in Toronto, it is a province-wide organization, and steps are planned to provide for more involvement by members across Ontario.) QO is the successor organization to the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario (CLGRO), which for 35 years waged a principled and militant struggle for queer rights, one of the major highlights being the amendment of the Ontario Human Rights Code in 1986 to include sexual orientation.

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A Call to Action from Indigenous and Women of Color Feminists

This article appeared in the Fourth International's online journal, *International Viewpoint*.

Between June 14 and June 23, 2011, a delegation of 11 scholars, activists, and artists visited occupied Palestine. As indigenous and women of color feminists involved in multiple social justice struggles, we sought to affirm our association with the growing international movement for a free Palestine. We wanted to see for ourselves the conditions under which Palestinian people live and struggle against what we can now confidently name as the Israeli project of apartheid and ethnic cleansing.

Each and every one of us—including those members of our delegation who grew up in the Jim Crow South, in apartheid South Africa, and on Indian reservations in the U.S.—was shocked by what we saw. In this statement we describe some of our experiences and issue an urgent call to others who share our commitment to racial justice, equality, and freedom.

During our short stay in Palestine, we met with academics, students, youth, leaders of civic organizations, elected officials, trade unionists, political leaders, artists, and civil society activists, as well as residents of refugee camps and villages that have been recently attacked by Israeli soldiers and settlers. Everyone we encountered—in Nablus, Awarta, Balata, Jerusalem, Hebron, Dheisheh, Bethlehem, Birzeit, Ramallah, Um el-Fahem, and Haifa—asked us to tell the truth about life under occupation and about their unwavering commitment to a free Palestine.

We were deeply impressed by people's insistence on the linkages between the movement for a free Palestine and struggles for justice throughout the world; as Martin Luther King Jr. insisted throughout his life, "Justice is indivisible. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Traveling by bus throughout the country, we saw vast numbers of Israeli settlements ominously perched in the hills, bearing witness to the systematic confiscation of Palestinian land in flagrant violation of international law and United Nations resolutions. We met with refugees across the country whose families had been evicted from their homes by Zionist forces, their land confiscated, their villages and olive groves razed. As a consequence of this ongoing displacement, Palestinians comprise the largest refugee population in the world (over five million), the majority living within 100 kilometers of their natal homes, villages, and farmlands. In defiance of United Nations Resolution 194, Israel has an active policy of opposing the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their ancestral homes and lands on the grounds that they are not entitled to exercise the Israeli Law of Return, which is reserved for Jews.

In Sheikh Jarrah, a neighborhood in eastern occupied Jerusalem, we met an 88-year-old woman who was forcibly evicted in the middle of the night; she watched as the Israeli military moved settlers into her house a mere two hours later. Now living in the small back rooms of what was once her large family residence,

.... LGBT in Toronto

(continued from page 8)

Thanks to membership growth, especially the addition of new and younger activists, QO has been able to move toward holding more public events and being more directly involved in immediate issues.

One of the most important of those is support for Catholic high-school students in their struggle against the church hierarchy (and the Ministry of Education's refusal to enforce its own policies) and in favour of the right to form Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) in schools. QO has been actively engaged in support of free speech at Pride and the push for community control. On the 40th anniversary of the first gay demonstration on Parliament Hill, Aug. 28, it is organizing an updated repeat rally in Ottawa under the slogan, "We (Still) Demand" (the original demonstration's theme was "We Demand").

Queer Ontario to date has been everything operations like Pride Toronto are not—democratic, inclusive, independent, and with a liberationist perspective. Its independence is illustrated by its insistence on holding accountable the Ontario Liberal government's Ministry of Education for refusal to enforce its own policies on GSAs, where others argue for the bankrupt "lesser-evil" politics of taking a soft line on the Liberals lest the more right-wing Conservatives win the next election. QO offers the kind of leadership needed to spark a renewal of queer liberation. ■

Justice for Palestine!



Dan Bailey / AP

(Above) Shufat refugee camp, near Jerusalem, Dec. 29, 2008: Palestinian women try to make their way during an attack by Israeli troops on a protest against Israel's military operation in Gaza.

she defiantly asserted that neither Israel's courts nor its military could ever force her from her home.

In the city of Hebron, we were stunned by the conspicuous presence of Israeli soldiers, who maintain veritable conditions of apartheid for the city's Palestinian population of almost 200,000, as against its 700 Jewish settlers.

We crossed several Israeli checkpoints designed to control Palestinian movement on West Bank roads and along the Green Line. Throughout our stay, we met Palestinians who, because of Israel's annexation of Jerusalem and plans to remove its native population, have been denied entry to the Holy City. We spoke to a man who lives 10 minutes away from Jerusalem but who has not been able to enter the city for 27 years. The Israeli government thus continues to wage a demographic war for Jewish dominance over the Palestinian population.

We were never able to escape the jarring sight of the ubiquitous apartheid wall, which stands in contempt of international law and human rights principles. Constructed of 25-foot-high concrete slabs, electrified cyclone fencing, and winding razor wire, it almost completely encloses the West Bank and extends well east of the Green Line marking Israel's pre-1967 borders. It snakes its way through ancient olive groves, destroying the beauty of the landscape, dividing communities and families, severing farmers from their fields and depriving them of their livelihood. In Abu Dis, the wall cuts across the campus of Al Quds University through the soccer field.

In Qalqiliya, we saw massive gates built to control the entry and access of Palestinians to their lands and homes, including a gated corridor through which Palestinians with increasingly rare Israeli-issued permits are processed as they enter Israel for work, sustaining the very state that has displaced them. Palestinian children are forced through similar corridors, lining-up for hours twice each day to attend school. As one Palestinian colleague put it, "Occupied Palestine is the largest prison in the world."

An extensive prison system bolsters the occupation and suppresses resistance. Everywhere we went we met people who had either been imprisoned themselves or had relatives who had been incarcerated. Twenty-thousand Palestinians are locked inside Israeli prisons; at least 8000 of them are political prisoners and more than 300 are children. In Jerusalem, we met with members of the Palestinian Legislative Council who are being protected from arrest by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

In Um el-Fahem, we met with an Islamist leader just after his release from prison and heard a riveting account of his experience on the *Mavi Marmara* and the 2010 Gaza Flotilla. The criminalization of their political activity, and that of the many Palestinians we met, was a constant and harrowing theme.

We also came to understand how overt repression is buttressed by deceptive representations of the state of Israel as the most developed social democracy in the region. As feminists, we deplore the Israeli practice of "pink-washing," the state's use of ostensible support for gender and sexual equality to dress-up its occupation. In Palestine, we consistently found evidence and analyses of a more substantive approach to an indivisible justice. We met the president and the leadership of the Arab Feminist Union and several other women's groups in Nablus who spoke about the role and strug-

gles of Palestinian women on several fronts.

We visited one of the oldest women's empowerment centers in Palestine, In'ash al-Usra, and learned about various income-generating cultural projects. We also spoke with Palestinian Queers for BDS [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions], young organizers who frame the struggle for gender and sexual justice as part and parcel of a comprehensive framework for self-determination and liberation.

Feminist colleagues at Birzeit University, An-Najah University, and Mada al-Carmel spoke to us about the organic linkage of anti-colonial resistance with gender and sexual equality, as well as about the transformative role Palestinian institutions of higher education play in these struggles.

We were continually inspired by the deep and abiding spirit of resistance in the stories people told us, in the murals inside buildings such as Ibdaa Center in Dheisheh Refugee Camp, in slogans painted on the apartheid wall in Qalqiliya, Bethlehem, and Abu Dis, in the education of young children, and in the commitment to emancipatory knowledge production. At our meeting with the Boycott National Committee—an umbrella alliance of over 200 Palestinian civil society organizations, including the General Union of Palestinian Women, the General Union of Palestinian Workers, the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel [PACBI], and the Palestinian Network of NGOs—we were humbled by their appeal: "We are not asking you for heroic action or to form freedom brigades. We are simply asking you not to be complicit in perpetuating the crimes of the Israeli state."

Therefore, we unequivocally endorse the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Campaign. The purpose of this campaign is to pressure Israeli state-sponsored institutions to adhere to international law, basic human rights, and democratic principles as a condition for just and equitable social relations. We reject the argument that to criticize the State of Israel is anti-Semitic. We stand with Palestinians, an increasing number of Jews, and other human rights activists all over the world in condemning the flagrant injustices of the Israeli occupation.

We call upon all of our academic and activist colleagues in the U.S. and elsewhere to join us by endorsing the BDS campaign and by working to end U.S. financial support, at \$8.2 million daily, for the Israeli state and its occupation. We call upon all people of conscience to engage in serious dialogue about Palestine and to acknowledge connections between the Palestinian cause and other struggles for justice. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. ■

July 12, 2011: Rabab Abdulhadi, San Francisco State University* • Ayoka Chenzira, artist and filmmaker, Atlanta, GA • Angela Y. Davis, University of California, Santa Cruz* • Gina Dent, University of California, Santa Cruz* • G. Melissa Garcia, Ph.D. Candidate, Yale University* • Anna Romina Guevarra, author and sociologist, Chicago, IL • Beverly Guy-Sheftall, author, Atlanta, GA • Premilla Nadasen, author, New York, NY • Barbara Ransby, author and historian, Chicago, IL • Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Syracuse University* • Waziya-tawin, University of Victoria*

(*For identification purposes only.)

Activists discuss SlutWalk perspectives

By ERICA THEIS and MARC ROME

SAN FRANCISCO—On July 23, about 30 dedicated activists assembled for an politically and socially incisive panel discussion about building SlutWalks, the international movement of women fighting against blaming rape victims and the oppression of woman more generally.

The tone for the open discussion was set by brief presentations from two Bay Area SlutWalk activists, Mer Stevens, a member of the International Socialist Organization and a job coach for people with developmental disabilities, and Marc Rome, San Francisco Socialist Action branch organizer and an activist with the United National Antiwar Committee.

Stevens put the SlutWalks in context by addressing the frequent high-profile sexual violence cases—most famously, the recent rape charges against Dominique Strauss Kahn—in which the media blamed the accuser. The right-wing *New York Post* shifted the guilt from Kahn, known as “The Great Seducer” of women, to the victim, claiming that “[t]he maid, who routinely traded sex for money with male guests, parked her cleaning cart outside [Strauss-Kahn’s] Suite 2806 on the morning of May 14 and keyed her way into the room.”

The way in which law-enforcement and governments perpetuate and contribute to victim-blaming mass psychology sheds another light on how the rulers of society shape social conscious. Stevens presented the recent example of the acquittal of two New York City police officers who had been accused of raping a woman.

She cited Arturo Gonzalez Rascan, who, in his capacity as Chihuahua, Mexico, state prosecutor, painted a misogynistic portrait of the nearly 13-year epidemic of murder and rape that claimed the lives of nearly 400 women workers of Ciudad Juarez: “Women with a nightlife who go out very late and come into contact with drinkers are at risk.” This violent history and open state-sponsored victim-blaming created the objective conditions by which SlutWalk Mexico City—and SlutWalks in general—have been so successful and empowering. The 5000 Mexican women marching in the streets in protest filled the vital subjective role of leadership building.

Rome’s presentation echoed Stevens’ view that the response in the streets by women has more to do with their outrage against systemic sexism than against any single sexist incident. He pointed to the long history of media objectification of women as one aspect of how women have been enduringly relegated to second-class status. Addressing a lesser-known story of the gang rape of an 11-year-old in Texas, he illustrated how even the “liberal” press perpetuates the myth that rape-victims are at fault. The reporter, a man, asked how the girl could “have been drawn into such an act.” He offered an answer: the victim “dressed older than her age, wearing makeup and fashions more appropriate to a woman in her 20s. She would hang out with teenage boys at the playground.”

Rome also made the case for viewing rape in today’s culture through the lens of the study of the history of civilization and war. By the time of the ancient Roman republic, women had become the property of men. Even throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, rape of women has been “standard operating procedure,” often ordered by the highest military leadership bodies.

Both Stevens and Rome addressed the tactic of mass mobilizations in the streets, which has defined the



(Left) Participant in Toronto SlutWalk, April 3.

SlutWalks and points the way forward for the movement, although its political and social goals have yet to be definitively determined.

The floor discussion, guided by chairperson and SlutWalk coalition activist Lauren Smith, raised many important questions for the movement.

Several commentators took up the question of whether men benefit materially from the oppression of women. It was noted that women perform \$11 trillion in unpaid labor in cooking, cleaning, and child care every year. This staggering amount of free labor, which is arguably keeping capitalism afloat, also keeps women who are dependant on a single breadwinner out of the “official” job market or forces working women to endure a “second shift” after they’ve clocked out. All men, regardless of their personal relationships with women, stand to earn more in sectors where they do not have to compete with women for “men’s work.”

Working-class men who think they have any real material interest in the continued oppression of women, however, would be making an extremely shortsighted assessment. By threatening to replace better-paid male workers with lower-paid women, bosses shrink wages for everyone. Is there a place, then, for men in feminist discourse? Indeed, there is no other way out of sexism. Men must recognize their gender privilege and actively eliminate their own potential for oppressive behavior—while committing to building a political movement to overturn the system that fosters sexist and racist oppression and prejudices.

Though most of the publicity for the Aug. 6 San Francisco SlutWalk has focused on what the movement is against rather than what it is for, the forum was also a place for organizers to share what they hoped to gain from the march and from a long-overdue mass movement of women. A popular desire among the women present was for a greater sense of safety in their everyday lives. This produced some speculation on the depth and breadth of social change required to simply make it possible to walk alone at night without fear.

Casting aside illusions about reforming or educating the police, there was also broad agreement that communities should take control of policing rape and domestic abuse situations. Community organization is furthermore capable, in the short term, of achieving

free access to abortion and contraceptives instead of prohibitively expensive services not available to poor women, whose burden multiplies by the child. On the flip side, one participant advocated defending women on welfare who are trying to keep their children from being taken away by the state on charges of neglect.

Consciousness-raising is an important aspect to any public action, and perpetuating the present discourse also requires lowering the age at which this discourse becomes available. Reaching out to adolescent girls in schools and in the community at large with a less sterile approach to learning about sexuality is an important part of sparing young women anxiety and confusion and prevents the men in their lives from exploiting their vulnerability.

Helping young girls understand the role of the family and the media in shaping their expectations for themselves will provide them with the tools to consciously resist those expectations, and arm them with the intellectual capacity to identify sexual abuse not as an isolated occurrence but a symptom of an oppressive social and economic structure for which they are not at fault.

Lastly, there was unanimous agreement that one of the most important goals of this movement is to be part of an international struggle that rejects the imposition of Western cultural definitions on “third world” women. This will inevitably entail a re-examination of the word “slut” and its potentially alienating impact on women who have been sexually exploited or whose ethnic identities have been overly sexualized in Western media. However, the discussion did not produce much interest in “taking back” the word or standing by it in the long term. Rather, there was a commitment to understand and build a movement to eradicate the oppressive influence of capital as it intersects with race and class in the lives of women. ■

... SlutWalks

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women that dressing in minimal clothing is not a prerequisite for participation. They have also had to alter the name in order to make it culturally appropriate.

Such adjustments highlight the complications that arise in a global movement for women’s rights and call attention to the need to include women of all ethnic backgrounds when setting an agenda for an international movement. These obstacles stem from the fact that the SlutWalk was originally developed as a small-scale response to a local incident and was organized in large part via Facebook.

Despite legitimate and vital critiques, the grassroots uprisings are an inspiring and welcomed development. They indicate that women and their allies are ready to fight institutionalized sexism in the face of a national blitzkrieg on women rights.

We must attempt to understand the aspirations that these layers of women have for sexual liberation, encourage others to join in and work with participants toward the development of a more inclusive feminist politics that addresses the class and ethnic specificities of all working women.

That said, the feminist movement cannot be reduced to the SlutWalk. As the politics of the SlutWalk develop and are continually shaped by global and cross-cultural influence, other efforts to combat rape, attacks on abortion and sexual freedom must continue. Although the SlutWalk has garnered substantial attention, it is hard to say where it is headed and what potential it has to engender real change. We’ve seen movements for women’s rights go awry through collaboration with the Democratic Party and law enforcement in the past.

Socialist Action argues for a grassroots mass movement that is independent of the capitalist parties. The rights that women have today were not handed to them or gained by pleading with politicians or begging for help from law enforcement. True women’s liberation means sexual freedom for all women despite ethnicity, class, or immigration status. It includes free and comprehensive health care, decent wages and the elimination of the wage disparity, job security, and safe, affordable child care. It means free and accessible birth control and abortion on demand and quality sex education from an early age. This is impossible under a wage-profit system, but is possible under an economy based on human need. Because the oppression of women is inextricably linked to the capitalist system, full liberation of women requires nothing short of a socialist revolution. ■

Federal judge authorizes new union election at Kaiser

Some 43,000 union workers at Kaiser Permanente will get a second chance to vote on which union they wish to represent them after Federal Administrative Law Judge Lana H. Parke ruled that collusion between Kaiser and the current union SEIU-UHW “interfered with employees’ exercise of a free and reasoned choice” and that a new election must be held.

Last October workers voted to retain SEIU-UHW over a new insurgent union, the National Union of Healthcare Workers. NUHW was formed after the SEIU international undemocratically trustee UHW and expelled the elected leadership after they had criticized SEIU’s “partnership agreement” with hospital chains and plans to move UHW home healthcare workers into another state wide local.

The expelled officers, staff, and hundreds of shop stewards and activists in UHW formed NUHW and began petitioning decertification votes at UHW shops so the workers could vote for NUHW to be their bargaining agents.

What followed was a 20-month David versus Goliath campaign, with the underfunded, mostly volunteer organizing efforts of NUHW versus a multi-

million-dollar mobilization of staff and resources by SEIU. Hundreds of SEIU organizers from across the country were sent to spread lies and fear to the Kaiser workers. Pro-NUHW elected shop stewards were removed from their posts.

SEIU not only had the advantage in resources, they also had the bosses on their side. Kaiser illegally assisted SEIU by spreading lies that changing unions would result in the loss of benefits, intimidating and harassing UHW supporters, and punishing smaller units that separately voted to join NUHW. Kaiser retaliated against those 2300 nurses and other professional employees for switching unions by withholding scheduled raises and other benefits. The combined SEIU Kaiser campaign eroded support for NUHW among a workforce filled with fear. In February 2009, 25,000 Kaiser workers signed pledges that they would vote to join NUHW. The final was 18,290 for SEIU, 11,364 for NUHW, and 365 for no union.

SEIU will certainly appeal the decision, but NUHW supporters are confident they will prevail in the courts and are preparing for an election to be held in 2012. — DAVID BERNT

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

"A Better Life," starring Demián Bichir and José Julián, directed by Chris Weitz.

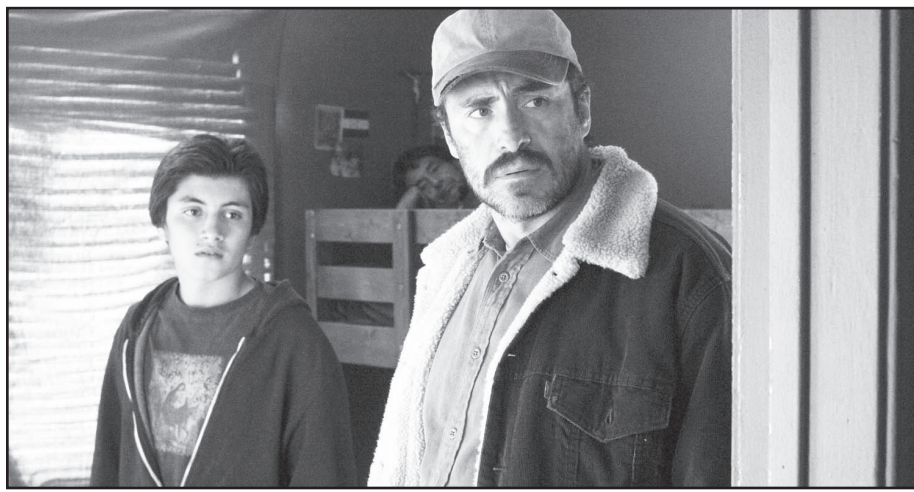
Los Angeles director Chris Weitz's "A Better Life" is a deceptively simple story of a single parent raising his son. The film lets us spend time with Carlos and Luís in and around their East LA home, and is as much Carlos' as it is Luís' film. The beauty of the camera work, direction, and acting is that we feel we are with them every step of the way. Carlos, the father, played sympathetically by Demián Bichir, is a Mexican undocumented worker with a son, Luís, a typical surly teen, beautifully acted by José Julián. Not long after Luís was born, Carlos' wife left him for a man with legal papers who had a better job, saddling Carlos with the child.

Carlos works, sleeps, and cooks—too tired to take off his clothes and boots at night. The film opens as he rises from the couch to wake Luís, to whom he's given the only bedroom. He rags his son about his school attendance and stresses the importance of an education so he'll have a better life than he himself has as a gardener for wealthy Anglos.

Director Weitz takes us through Carlos' workday. He and his partner, who drives a truck, maintain vast lawns beside sparkling pools, weed flower beds, transplant huge shrubs, and cut dead palm fronds from 50 ft. trees, using nothing more than a wide leather belt and crampons.

Luís is caught between the world of staying straight and that of joining a gang. He gets in trouble with the cops for an altercation at school and protects his dad's illegal status by telling an of-

A Better Life: At what price?



ficer he can't be notified because he's working. Luís is let go when he proves he is not a gang-banger.

Through the camera lens and Weitz's direction, "A Better Life" allows us to look, like voyeurs, into the reality of life for the immigrant workers—some of whom have only a bunk bed to relax on, in a tiny room shared with other casual laborers. The sun, seen through a dusty haze, is always shining; there are palms and garishly colored tropical flowers everywhere. Were it not for the peeling paint on homes and buildings, broken-down cars and trucks, and graffiti that says, "Two many Mexicans, not enough bullets," it could pass for a paradise.

Schools are heavily guarded and patrolled like prisons. We get a sense, too, of the deadly social order of the gangs in East LA. Like the Mafia, they are close to their families; delighting in watching their pre-pubescent sisters singing ka-

raoke as female relatives look on.

Carlos' troubles begin when his partner doesn't pick him up one day because he's seeing someone about buying his truck—which he had initially offered to Carlos. So Carlos returns to a corner with other day laborers waiting for a job; trusting and naïve, he befriends Santiago (Carlos Linares), a man more down and out than he, which ends up as a huge mistake. Sensing a lost opportunity, he borrows money from his married, middle-class sister to buy his partner's truck. The shots of Carlos driving around, smiling, are delightful. In the back of his mind, he knows he must drive carefully so as not to attract a traffic cop's attention.

His joy is short-lived as he is betrayed. He now must rely on his street-smart son to help him right the wrong done to him. While waiting for the opportune moment, Carlos and Luís go to

a charro (a Mexican rodeo), where we can almost smell the food, the manure, and the sweat. Over a meal, Carlos fills in Luís on the boy's past. Luís replies existentially, "What's the point?"

With Luís beside him, Carlos pulls off a heart-pounding, daring act, which cements their relationship but lands Carlos in a detention center. We feel as though we are with him as, after a humiliating strip-search, he listens, along with shell-shocked, unshaven men and boys now wearing orange jumpsuits, to an armed, white guard reciting the center's regulations. An immigration attorney advises a chained and manacled Carlos of his options and warns him against trying to return once deported.

Luís goes home to an empty house, pausing at the kitchen garden his father once tended. His loneliness is palpable. The film ends, the screen goes dark, we pick up our jackets and leave for our world, leaving the immigrant workers to theirs—often nearly invisible as they clean our hotel rooms and homes, work in the fields picking our food, doing our landscaping, and taking care of our kids.

Under current federal laws and those of Arizona and states following its lead, parents are deported while leaving behind naturalized children to fend for themselves. This results in heartbreaking scenarios and trauma, as shown in "A Better Life." And fences and walls have been or are being built along the U.S.-Mexican border. Police and vigilante patrols are beefed up; people killed.

We must do all we can to protest these inhumane conditions and the system that creates them. Perhaps one day, people like Luís need not be separated from their families. ■

Sandy Pope campaign provides new vision for Teamsters union leadership

By DAVID BERNT

Thousands of delegates, members, and guests gathered in Las Vegas in late June for the 28th International Convention of the 1.3-million-member Teamsters union. The assembled delegates were given a dazzling spectacle of a show that was fit for the city of sin. The incumbent Hoffa administration spent millions of dues dollars for a show that included a motorcade of Harleys on the convention floor, paid celebrity appearances, professionally produced videos beamed on jumbo trans, and a series of speeches and resolutions praising the current leadership and touting their accomplishments.

The delegates, mostly local officers loyal to the administration, turned what is supposed to be the union's highest decision-making body, where delegates bring the concerns and ideas of the members they represent to be democratically discussed, into a multi-million-dollar pep rally.

However, all the theatrics in the world cannot hide the fact that the Teamsters rank and file are under attack from employers and have received little support from the international. In the union's traditional industry, freight trucking, membership is at an all time low. Members at the union's largest freight employer, YRC, have taken 15% wage cuts and indefinite suspension of employer pension contributions.

While the overwhelming majority of freight trucking remains non-union, Hoffa has done little to organize this critical sector. The only major organizing victory in freight under Hoffa's watch has been UPS Freight, a company created when UPS purchased the non-union carrier Overnight, a company the Teamsters formerly had attempted to organize, only to be routed when in 1999 Hoffa called a disastrous premature strike that blew up the organizing campaign. After UPS purchased Overnight, UPS agreed to card-check neutrality with the IBT in exchange for massive concessions in the national UPS contract.

In addition, UPS Freight workers are under a contract below the standards of the National Master Freight Agreement, undermining not only the strength of Teamsters at UPS Freight, but in the entire freight industry as UPS Freight underbids other union freight carriers with its lower wage and pension obligations.

The NMFA was negotiated by Hoffa Jr's father in order to establish pattern bargaining that would prevent companies from engaging in such practices. As it stands today, the NMFA is barely worth the paper it's written on, with Hoffa allowing concessions every time employers cry wolf.

At the union's largest employer, shipping giant UPS, Hoffa granted massive concessions, including allowing UPS to withdraw from the union's largest multi-employer pension fund, the Central States Pension Fund, de-



Teamster presidential candidate Sandy Pope.

spite the company's record profits. UPS workers in the central states now have an inferior company pension, and the Teamsters still in the multi-employer plan have a pension fund on the brink of insolvency after losing its largest contributing employer.

In UPS negotiations Hoffa sold out on full-time job creation and left starting pay frozen at only \$8.50 an hour. The only UPS Teamsters who have seen a raise in starting pay under Hoffa are in Washington state, where the minimum wage recently was raised to \$8.67 per hour.

Meanwhile, UPS continues to violate existing language with no response from the international, including layoffs of full-time inside workers. In a conference call with UPS stewards, Hoffa running mate Ken Hall told participants that "it wasn't the right time" to enforce the contract. This is the Hoffa-Hall response while UPS made \$5.8 billion in after tax profits in 2010. The same scenario is playing out across all Teamster divisions, with a laundry list of concessions.

Not all the delegates at the Las Vegas convention, and certainly not most rank and filers, are drinking the Hoffa kool-aid. In fact, thousands of rank-and-file activists across the country are organizing to dump Hoffa and elect reform candidate Sandy Pope as the next Teamster general president; 130 elected delegates nominated her in Las Vegas, and 50,000 members have signed petitions in support of her candidacy.

Sandy Pope, president of New York Local 805, will face off against Hoffa and another challenger, Fred Gegare, a former Hoffa loyalist. Pope is supported by the rank-and-file caucus, Teamsters for a Democratic Union, and is a veteran reform activist in the Teamsters union. Unlike Hoffa, Pope spent years working as a Teamster in the warehouse and freight industries. She helped organize a

successful month-long strike of Teamster Steel haulers in 1979. After Ron Carey ousted the old-guard Mafia-controlled leadership and won the Teamster presidency in 1991, he appointed Sandy International Representative assigned to the Warehouse Division.

In 1999, Sandy went to work for Local 805. In 2004, the union's president cut a deal with employers to slash members' pension accrual to zero. Sandy united with rank-and-file members to take back the local. They won, and Sandy has served as Local 805 president ever since. She has negotiated contracts that have protected members' health benefits and pensions and mobilized members and joined forces with other Teamster locals and community groups to take on nonunion competitors who are threatening good union jobs.

Sandy Pope brings a different vision of how the union should work than Hoffa's concession-machine model. She calls for the mobilization of the members to negotiate strong contracts and organize the nonunion competition. It is to be expected that as Teamster president Sandy Pope will take a hard line in negotiations with employers and back it up with a rank-and-file organized to take action. This was the type of leadership the Teamsters had under Ron Carey, who led the successful 1997 national strike against UPS.

In her acceptance speech Sandy said, "I was in Canton, Ohio, when Teamster steelhaulers voted to strike rather than accept a substandard contract. Waves of Teamsters poured out of their union hall to hit the pavement, stop every steelhaul truck and shut the industry down. That was Teamster power! It wasn't declared in a press release. It was built by Teamster members standing shoulder to shoulder. I have never forgotten the lesson taught to me by those steelhaulers and freight Teamsters in Cleveland—that Teamster power comes from members in action..."

"Hoffa didn't come up through the ranks. He's a career union politician who rode into office on his father's last name and on the shoulders of other Teamster leaders. And that's why Hoffa is so threatened by Teamster members and by local officers who have their own ideas. Where I see Teamsters, I see leadership and power. Hoffa sees a threat to his job."

The labor movement today is in crisis mode. Employers are on the offensive against all unions. As in the Teamsters, the response from union leaders, with rare exceptions, has been to lay down and accept concessions. Transforming our weakened unions into effective vehicles to fight back against the bosses offensive will require many struggles, especially a revival of the strike and the formation of a Labor Party. Advancing democracy in the unions and engaging the rank and file are necessary for such battles. A Sandy Pope presidency in the Teamsters would represent a major advance in this struggle. ■

SlutWalks: confronting the attacks on women's rights

By ONA TZINGER

Feminists across the globe were angered as they learned last month that the former head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and French presidential hopeful, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, would likely be exculpated from the charges of attempted rape of a Guinean immigrant working as a maid due to questions about her credibility. Regrettably, Strauss-Kahn's defense and the capitalist media have colluded to tarnish her image by digging up details from her past, including alleged forgery on her taxes.

Notably missing in big media reports is information that is readily available about Strauss-Kahn's history of sexist and abusive behavior. Indeed, another of his victims has already come forward. That the defense's questionable slander may be enough to discredit her case both in the public imagination and in court underscores the flimsiness of the American legal system and its quickness to dismiss complaints of working and immigrant women.

Unfortunately, the direction taken in Strauss Kahn's case is not surprising to feminists internationally but merely affirms a common experience among women in which the sex crimes of wealthy, powerful men are regularly justified.

Feminists are watching Diallo's case carefully after having just witnessed a major defeat for the women's labor movement, in which the class-action suit against WalMart filed by 1.6 million militant female employees was recently dismissed by the U.S. Supreme Court despite ample evidence of WalMart's sexist discrimination. This defeat left people across the U.S. with a bitter taste in their mouths as they learned that the most powerful multinational corporations are beyond accountability. The decision should come as no surprise given what we know about heavy representation of corporate interests in the American political system, as evidenced by collaborative bodies such as ALEC—the American Legislative Exchange Council—a group that joins state legislators and powerful corporate representatives in order to draft corporate-friendly anti-labor bills to be introduced in state governments across the United States.

The reproductive rights movement also has faced mounting attacks this year, which has set a new record for the number of new laws that infringe on reproductive freedom. So far this year, 19 states have enacted 162 laws seeking to hinder women's access to reproductive health-care services, including abortion.

Along with recycled tactics aimed at curbing reproductive freedom such as redefining fetal viability to an earlier period of gestation, launching media campaigns centered on fetal personhood, and defunding the procedure, anti-abortion forces are becoming more creative in their campaigns. Five states have passed laws this year that ban abortions after 20 weeks, claiming that this is when the fetus begins to feel pain. New legislation reflects an egregious infringement on women's privacy, such as a proposed Georgia bill that would mandate police investigations of all women who miscarried their pregnancies, including victims of rape, and require the issuing of a fetal death certificate. If enacted, this would disproportionately affect women of color, who must already contend with heightened discrimination and criminalization by police.

Some liberals attribute these attacks to a reaction against what they perceive as a progressive administration in Washington that will secure gains for women. Despite campaigning as a pro-choice candidate, however, President Obama disappointed women across the country when, as part of his health-care overhaul, he renewed the Hyde amendment—a virulent erosion of *Roe v. Wade*, which prevents federal funding for abortion (including Medicaid) and effectively precludes low-income women, including high numbers of women of color, from their right to the procedure.

So how can we make sense of this mounting offensive on reproductive and other rights of women? In the midst of an economic recession that threatens to duplicate the Great Depression of the 1930s, it is predictable that women are under attack. Within the capitalist system women serve as a reserve army of labor that can be conveniently manipulated according to the



(Above) Boston SlutWalk passes the Massachusetts Statehouse, May 7.

Police and others in the 'justice' system have a history of blaming victims of rape. In response, SlutWalks shout defiance toward institutionalized sexism.

needs of the economy, thrown in and out of the remunerated labor force and used to drive down wages for all working people.

In periods of economic downturn, when there are not enough jobs to go around, women's rights are threatened—similar to the rise in attacks on undocumented immigrants. During the Industrial Revolution, in the early 1800s, women were brought into the workforce when it was a necessity for the capitalist class to maintain profits—only to be shoved back into the home when their economic purpose had been served. This happened again after the Second World War. Both in and out of paid work, women are expected to shoulder the burden of unpaid domestic labor including physical and social reproduction and rearing of the next generation of wage slaves. Ruling elites presume that when working women are preoccupied with surviving and have to struggle to address their most basic needs, they will be a weakened force and unable to unite and stand up to demand their rights.

Specific attacks against women are being waged alongside the broader anti-worker campaign of the ruling class, which has already threatened the collective bargaining rights of workers across the country this year. Despite deepening antiwar sentiment throughout the nation and epidemic levels of unemployment, legislators have focused their energy not on job creation or diminishing the war budget, but on increasing attacks on workers as they usher in record profits for themselves.

Within this caustic political climate, there has been an inspiring, if imperfect, development in recent months—the series of contagious demonstrations against rape and institutionalized victim-blaming known as “SlutWalks.”

What began as a modest initiative of five Canadian women has put people into motion on an international scale. The actions have carved out a space for women transnationally to voice their experiences with sexual assault. Indeed, several of the satellite SlutWalk websites have been transformed into blogs for women to share their stories, many for the first time. Perhaps one of the most significant outcomes has been the growing dialogue on how to create a movement that includes and represents the experience and voice of women who live at the intersection of multiple avenues of oppression.

As feminists within communities of color have been quick to explain, the dominant perspective reflected in the SlutWalk is that of privileged and white women, for whom it is easier to don revealing outfits while re-appropriating sexist slurs than for women of color, who suffer doubly from widespread characterizations of sluttishness, pornographic objectification, and sexual victimization often at the hands of law enforcement.

Undeniably, the SlutWalk has a post-modern flavor. It attempts to celebrate individual choice without reflecting on how these choices affect our most oppressed sisters. In doing so, the SlutWalk conveniently ignores that as women our choices are severely constrained within a patriarchal society and conceals diverse definitions of an empowered womanhood across ethnic and class lines.

As South Asian organizer and writer Harsha Walia aptly notes, “In the post 9/11 climate, the focus on a particular version of sex(y)-positive feminism runs the risk of further marginalizing Muslim women's movements who are hugely impacted by the racist ‘reasonable accommodation’ debate and state policies against the niqab.”

Further, the character of the actions can be interpreted as an extension and endorsement of “raunch culture” perpetuated by the multi-million dollar porn industry, which commodifies women's bodies and sexuality for large profits.

The SlutWalk has magnified a generational divide in ideology and tactics between second and third-wave feminists and has facilitated imperative inter-generational discussions on the best strategy toward women's liberation. While younger generations of women and men have been quick to join in, many who came out of the women's movement of the 1970s are cautioning against sacrificing hard-won gains. Although they support the message and are moved by the energy it has harnessed, they remain turned off by the problematic packaging.

As Rebecca Traister noted in a *New York Times* op-ed, “To object to these ugly characterizations is right and righteous. But to do so while dressed in what look like sexy stewardess Halloween costumes seems less like victory than capitulation (linguistic and sartorial) to what society already expects of its young women.”

SlutWalks have now been organized in over 70 cities in the U.S., Australia, Sweden, the UK, the Netherlands, Canada, and South Africa. Most recently, SlutWalks have spread to India and South Korea. International organizers have faced challenges adapting the SlutWalk to local cultural norms and sensibilities while trying to preserve its objectives and character. In Delhi, Indian organizers have had a tough time reassuring

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